TEACHING ENGLISH

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EDITORIAL

We are late with this issue and must apologise to subscribers to *Teaching English* for the delay. This has been due to leave problems and to pressure of other work and we hope that our apology will be accepted.

The present editor has in the last few months met many teachers in Northern India, and it is obvious that, although much consideration has been given to the teaching of English in these last years, a great deal of it has been irresponsible and unrelated to the problems of the teachers themselves. For example, there are certain Training Colleges which teach students how to use the film projector, the epidiascope, the tape-recorder, the record-player, but which consider only very superficially the only audio-visual aids which are available to the vast majority of teachers, namely, the text-book, the blackboard, wall pictures, and the teacher himself. To be successful in our teaching work we must keep our feet on the ground and make the best of existing conditions which are certainly very far from ideal.

Anyone who is interested in the teaching of English should be even more interested in the teachers who are teaching it and in the pupils who are going to learn or are learning it. He should know the limitations of the teachers' command of English; the conditions in which they work; the text-books which they must use and, if necessary, give guidance in how to use them or adapt them. He should understand the type of pupils who are learning, consider why they are learning English, and where they are learning it; in fact his preoccupation should be with what can be done in an ordinary classroom in normal circumstances, and by an ordinary teacher, rather than with what should be done in abnormal circumstances by expert teachers. The 'should' of the matter will come when the teachers know what can be done. If the teachers are guided properly in what can be done, they will in time come to reasonable conclusions about what should be done, and it will then be done.

Theorists must theorise with their feet on the ground. This does not mean that only the teaching of elementary English should be considered. Since Sir Edmund Hilary and Tensing scaled Mount Everest, it is possible to have your feet on the ground at any height up to 29,002 feet, and the examination of problems at any level of English is useful, if they are practical problems and the examination is concerned with reality.

We shall therefore welcome articles on any practical aspect of teaching English, on, for example, experiments in group work, on play-reading or writing, on the use of games in teaching, on text-book adaptation, or on almost anything which might be of help to ordinary teachers at any level. We shall also welcome notes on classroom experiments which have failed, for much is also to be learnt from failures. The articles need not be long, nor need they be in perfect English. We can remedy mistakes.

PRINCIPLES OF COMPOSITION TEACHING

BY INDRA SWARUP SRIVASTAVA

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'THE accumulation of facts may make you well-informed, but knowledge and wisdom come from the discovery of principle.' (Sir Percy Buck).[1]

Reporting of special techniques by specialists and classroom procedures by working teachers puts education on a firmer ground, but individual practices suffer from severe drawbacks to the effect that all teachers on account of their differing personality-traits are unable to handle them. But a firm grasp of principles enables a teacher to adapt any method to suit his class or to suit his genius. Hence, a thoughtful consideration of fundamental principles of composition teaching is worthwhile; keeping the fact in view that the latter is the most vexing problem for language teachers.

A composition lesson is essentially a practice lesson; it is 'a synthesis of the linguistic elements so far acquired, that are relevant to a topic chosen.'[2] The natural corollary to it is that new structures and vocabulary items should not be introduced in any composition piece, at least in lower classes. Only that language material which the pupils have learnt should be made to serve as a vehicle for the expression of pupil-experiences.

1. *Principle of gradation* : The length of composition, its complexity of details and topics should be graded according to 'age, ability and aptitude'. The length of a composition piece in terms of words, broad details of an essay, suitability of topics can be determined by a number of teachers on a regional basis. This type of work has been done in foreign countries as is evident from the work done by Dr. Cyril Burt and by Dr. F. G. Schonell.

[1] Quoted by P. Gurrey on p. 34 of *The Teaching of Written English* (Longmans. 1955).

[2] Mrs. F. M. Hodgson, *Learning Modern Languages* (1955).

The teacher can himself grade topics according to difficulty. He must know from his experience what topics produce good composition pieces and what details and length are expected of pupils in various classes. In all these considerations, pupils' maturity, their intelligence and their interest will count much.

2. *Principle governing the selection of topics* : In Junior High School classes 'the appropriate topic will be determined by the particular structures mastered at any given stage, and as the field of linguistic experience broadens, the choice of topic will become more wide and more varied.'[1] But in a free composition, *'the best subjects are those that are particular, limited, concrete and realistic.'*[2] These four criteria can best be understood by juxtaposing them with their opposites. 'Beasts of Burden', 'Travel', 'Forest Life' are general topics as opposed to particular ones. A subject like 'City Life' which appears to be satisfactory as it is concrete and realistic is not limited and the title should have been 'Life in My City'—a topic which satisfies all the four criteria. 'Friendship, Love, Honesty and Patriotism' are quite abstract topics and even beyond the standard of Intermediate classes. Unreal topics are those that lie outside the experiences of pupils. Some of the topics that satisfy these criteria are :—

'The view from the class-room window, Animals I see on the way to school, the School playing field, How to clean a pair of shoes, How to make a paper aeroplane, My best friend.'[3] 'What I play at home, Toys of my baby brother or sister, A hot day which I have experienced, My dress, What I see in the main street of my town, Going shopping etc.' Collecting good titles is a great asset for a language teacher.

Dr. Schonell's researches have proved that in comparison to Imaginative and Explanatory compositions, Reproductive and Narrative compositions are better handled by pupils. Even in the mother tongue, up to the age of fifteen, 'short reproductive exercises in narrative and description are likely to form the staple composition for younger pupils in secondary schools.'[4]

A title should be specific and should help children in attending to one thing at a time. 'Choose titles which give not a wide but a small target.' (D. Benzies). A sentence or a phrase instead of a word serves better as a title, but proverbs always produce very poor work. On the advice of P. Gurrey, the subjects of 'Pets' which are remote from the experiences of Indian pupils, subjects

[1] Mrs. F. M. Hodgson, op. cit.

[2] P. Gurrey, *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*, Longmans, 1956.

[3] Suggested by Mr. J. G. Bruton in his article on Composition in *Teaching English*, Vol. III, No. 3 issued from British Council, New Delhi.

[4] *Language*, H.M. S.O. 1954.

dealt with in the children's readers, subjects dealing with games which involve too complicated and too many small actions, and proverbs should always be avoided.

3. *Principle of oral work* : At all stages oral work should be considered an integral part of composition teaching. The teacher should for his convenience formulate specific objectives for oral work apart from those for written composition. Some of these aims for the teacher and his pupils to cater for are fluency, accuracy, oral responsiveness, expressiveness, logical organization of ideas, selection of adequate words and a variety of ideas to suit the mood and the tone of the situation. In written work legibility, speed, neatness, spelling, punctuation, formal style may be attached simultaneously or one at a time.

4. *Principle of experience* : In India one is struck by the extreme poverty of pupils' experiences. They do not cultivate hobbies and outside interests and think it better to kill eternity with a wink. As the saying goes, there can be no expression without impression. 'It follows from this that it is essential for the teacher to help the children to realize their experiences, to encourage them to use their ears and eyes and to concentrate their full powers on what is happening before them at the moment.' Encourage wide reading, promote visits of all kinds, outings, camps, journeys, poetry festivals etc.

5. *Principle of purpose* : Pupils should not only know what they are writing about, but why they are writing—'to instruct, to entertain, to persuade, or to explain' for writing without any aim in view never gives rise to clarity of thought and clarity of expression and hence, it is wasteful of energy. Children may be helped to write about their daily activities, their demands, interests, unusual incidents, their collection, their love affairs, their new acquaintances etc. in order to inform the teacher, their friends, their group leader or their parents. They must write when they feel an urge to write, not because certain composition topics are on their syllabus or have been set for homework. And they must judge however vaguely, inaccurately or intuitively whether they are on their way to achieve their own formulated objectives. Sir Philip Hartog rightly pleaded for the writing of school pupils to be directed always to a known audience.

6. *Principle of group work* : Very good literature now exists on group work and particularly useful are articles written by Dr. J. Forrester, E. V. Gatenby, R. S. James and F. L. Billows in various numbers of *Teaching English,* but this principle is deplorably neglected in Indian schools. A few practical suggestions may be mentioned here. The whole class may be divided into three or four convenient groups. All the members of the

group may participate in writing out a single essay and reading it to the whole class, in writing out editorials, feature articles, advertisements and matrimonials for a newspaper, in carrying out a project and describing various duties assigned to various members. Thus the teacher's correction work will also be minimised.

7. *Principle of sequence* :[1] To achieve this objective it is essential that pupils should be stimulated to speak three or four short connected sentences in a series at a time on a picture, object, activity or on a topic. Question and Answer Method which requires only one sentence as a response to a question is not only useless but definitely harmful in teaching composition for it does not develop sequence, expressiveness, and coherence.

To sum up, *Composition work may be looked upon as a purposive activity, a continuous process directed always to a known audience and requiring not only a complex synthesis of linguistic elements acquired by pupils, but involving the integration and organization of meaningful experiences of pupils in logical sequence.* Psychologically speaking, it is an emotive and exhilarating linguistic response pattern to external and internal stimuli working together as a gestalt—a *sine qua non* for the development of rounded personalities and for the prevention of mental aberrations. Immense is the task of the teacher who has to strike a balance between fluency and accuracy and who has to help children to think out subjects for themselves, to select their own plans, to concentrate on what particularly interests them; who has to provide incentives to quicken the pace of slow learners, who has to drop in a word or so by way of praise and who has to gradually shift the responsibility of composition work on to the pupils themselves. In the last analysis, it must be pointed out that a teacher should not be too much after a topic, but any natural or artificial situation manipulated in the class in which pupils use English Language for various purposes—for greeting their friends, for conversation, recitation, dramatization, mimic activities, for making statements about things, for making requests, putting questions, issuing orders and notices, for reporting news items etc.—provides a good substance for composition work. Above all, what is of considerable importance is the enthusiasm of a devoted teacher, who has to formulate objectives, devise suitable techniques of teaching, test and re-test pupil achievement and change his plan in the light of his experience. The teacher must learn by teaching with a 'willing suspension of disbelief' in the fact that nothing is final, everything is becoming and the real teacher is still to be.

[1] Please consult the article on 'The Sequence Technique of Composition Teaching' published in the May issue of *Education*.

AN EXPERIMENT IN PLAY-WRITING

BY MRS. MINA SWAMINATHAN

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THE composition lesson, written or oral, is often one of the biggest headaches the teacher of English has to face. In the effort to find ways of making it both interesting and effective, however, one sometimes comes across ideas which lead in new and unexpected directions and provide varieties of experience and material for composition in ways not originally planned. Below, I should like to describe one such experiment which grew out of very small beginnings and ended in results which I, for one, had certainly not foreseen.

It began with an exercise in the use of the telephone, which was intended to give the children training in dealing with some practical everyday situations as well as opportunities to practise spoken English. The class was grouped in pairs, and each pair was given a slip containing a situation about which a telephone call was to be made. The first set of situations were extremely simple—e.g. finding out the times of arrival of trains, buying tickets, finding out prices and addresses, invitations to parties, cancelling social engagements etc. Each pair was given a few minutes to prepare and then make an imaginary telephone call, standing at opposite ends of the room, facing away from each other. Immediately after the dialogue was spoken, it was written down. As the class became familiar with the method, variants were introduced in the next few lessons—for example, only one of the pair might be told what the situation was, so that more skill was required to elicit the right responses from the partner, or both would be assigned their roles but given no time to prepare. Next, more complicated situations were handled—reporting a robbery to the police, answering advertisements, arranging to return lost property to the owner who had advertised for it, breaking the news to a parent that one of his children had been involved in an accident or suddenly taken ill, and so on. Some of the situations proved difficult, and were tackled over and over again by different pairs, the rest of the class watching carefully and noting the lapses. Mistakes were discussed and corrected, and above all, the importance of giving all the relevant information and as little of the irrelevant was brought home through the comments of the class.

The next step was to take one of the situations already tackled as central and ask ourselves the questions, 'What led up to this?' and 'What happened as a result?' Many suggestions were put forward, and one or two examples, worked out co-operatively by the class, provided the model for a set of three short dialogues or a three-scene playlet based on a central situation. Once this was done, we began to go ahead and elaborate. The class now worked individually, producing small playlets on the same model, but no longer confined to a simple telephone call as the centre of the play. Any exciting situation could be used, the events leading up to it and the consequences being shown. At this stage, characters could be added, scenes varied, plots refined and dialogue enriched according to the capacities of individual students. In order to prevent repetition and dragging scenes, a rule was made that some definite action must take place in each scene, though this in turn led to somewhat melodramatic plays. Some of the playlets were read and discussed by the class—this led to an elementary discussion of character, motive and plot and showed the need for careful construction of plots.

In the final stage, the class was divided into groups of six or seven, and each group given a theme for a play, which might be either the beginning, the middle or the end, on the basis of which the group had to improvise and present a play. For example, one group might have the assignment: 'You are planning for and preparing to set out on a journey of some kind, when suddenly the postman brings a letter. Something has happened to prevent your trip. What is it and what will you do now to solve the difficulty?' The group would have to complete the story suitably and then act it out. The preparation for the journey, the arrival of the bad news and the brilliant solution or the tragic end might be shown in separate scenes or all in one. Ingenuity would be taxed to find suitable roles, speaking or silent, for all those in the group. The outline of each scene and the dialogue would be hastily worked out, most of the speaking being improvised. After the group had presented the play, members of it wrote down their own or improved versions of it. By now most of the class was enthusiastic enough about playwriting and felt well-versed enough in its mechanics to write their own plays on any given title or theme, and so with a period devoted to the free composition of plays, this project came to an end.

In the course of this experiment, which grew slowly out of suggestions made by the children as well as my own ideas, a great deal of serious head-scratching and hard thinking was done by everyone, and there was much opportunity to practise and improve spoken and written English. In each case, there was something

definite and concrete to talk and write about, and that something mostly within the daily experience of most children. The two great bogies of English Composition—the lack of ideas and the lack of the ability to organise them—were avoided. There was enough material to chew over, to add to and to develop and enough time to do so before speaking or writing became necessary, and for the organisation of ideas, a plan was suggested. Improved versions of the same situation were often presented, and the written play was usually a corrected and improved version of the spoken. The least imaginative had enough to go on to produce a bare outline, however feeble, of a story, while the most imaginative had enough scope to enrich and strengthen the outline, but for all it was an exercise of imagination. The joy of acting and of creation was also given to all. Obviously, other models for plays besides the one used and many variations of method could have been used, but even those used provided enough material to fill two months and many exercise books with satisfying activities and creative writing, and showed how fruitfully even the humblest of ideas may grow.

ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH POETRY IN COLLEGES

By S. Nagarajan

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The reading of poetry (in any language) is, I believe, essential to a complete education; poetry extends imaginative awareness and refines the emotional sensibility; it causes an inward possession of the language in which it is written by revealing linguistic possibilities unrealized otherwise.

The case for the reading of English poetry by all those who are set to learn English is based on these twin considerations. English poetry extends the range of our imaginative experience—there may even be emotional experiences unobtainable elsewhere—and it is English poetry alone that can reveal the possibilities of the English language. The awareness of the imagination and the refinement of the sensibility are the outcome of an experience presented and accessible only in and through the language of the poem.

Judged by these criteria, it will have to be admitted that the teaching of English poetry in our colleges is not effectual. The poems prescribed are not always carefully chosen. For instance, in one University that I know of, the Junior Intermediate boys have to read a selection from Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia,*

Joseph Blanco White's *Night,* Newman's *Lead Kindly Light,* Henley's *Invictus* and Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village.* Newman and Goldsmith are certainly not bad but they are hardly suitable for the Junior Intermediate. Surely, abstruse research was not necessary in order to prescribe poems from the poetry of the past which can be understood without undue difficulty by Intermediate boys and which are also first-rate poetry in any estimation. I say 'the poetry of the past' for compilers generally fight shy of modern poetry, either in order to maximize the clearings from the text-book sales by avoiding copyright poems or in the naive belief that 'all this modern stuff' is highly obscure and difficult.

The second cause of our failure is that poetry is too often taught by people who have ceased to take any vital interest in it, whose tastes have become ossified; there are too many teachers who think that English poetry ended with Tennyson or at the latest, Hardy. The teacher of poetry needs to be constantly exploring the new poetry of his times and critically examining it in the light of the past. I do not mean, of course, that contemporary poetry is invariably good, that it is the only poetry that can realize our objectives. When it is good, it has the additional virtue that it is written by poets who are aware of our immediate conditions of life, being of our own age. The appeal of contemporaneity is not to be despised when we are trying to show that poetry is a living value in our civilization.

Again, there is too much of teaching; it is stanchless. Everything, everything is explained with ruthless thoroughness. Nothing is trusted to the silent commerce between the student and the poem. Such exhausting and exhaustive explanation is sometimes forced on the teacher because poems far above the standard of the class are prescribed by Authority. Explanation is not unnecessary; for imperfect understanding is no condition for the enjoyment of a poem. But explanation or analysis must be done mostly by the student, not for the student by the teacher, except in the initial stages. At its extreme, the view that poetry can be grasped by wholly intellectual means may defeat the very purpose of teaching poetry. That purpose, as I see it, consists in facilitating the student's enjoyment and understanding of the poem; the explanation is a preliminary; thought about the poem is also a preliminary; the final act which opens the poem to the possession of the student is wholly the responsibility of the student himself.

One of the crippling blows to the development of a genuine and enduring love of poetry is the examination. As they are, examinations are hardly pleasant experiences. When we make poetry an examination subject, poetry becomes hateful. Compulsion in education is morally evil. It injures the student's character.

In poetry, compulsion is aesthetically squalid also. It injures the cause of poetry as well. The case for the essential place of poetry rests on the unforced, free and generous loyalty brought to its reading. It is the confessed failure of a system of education where the boys refuse to read unless the reading-material is set for an examination.

I have instanced above the poems prescribed for the Junior Inter. Neither the range nor the variety of English poetry is even faintly suggested by that selection. Too often the selection is so limited in quantity, and therefore also in quality, that the boys are under-fed. In order 'to fill' the period at his disposal, the teacher is obliged to fatigue the poem, to overtalk about it. They expect a harvest of poetry; we afflict them with a locust-cloud of explanation.

If what I have said is correct and just, the following suggestions may be of some interest.

Instead of a dozen poems, a hundred poems—obviously not the long ones—should be prescribed. The actual choice may be left not to a Central Board of Studies but to the teacher concerned who after all knows best the standard and the interests of his class. (Incidentally, this will liberate poetry from the prison of the bazaar crib where it languishes now.) Poetry should not be part of a University examination. Why should it be? The result of the boys' reading of poetry will be seen as much in the Civics paper as in the English. Each teacher may be permitted to conduct the poetry examination for his class in the manner, and whenever, he thinks fit and appropriate. Again, if a poet, in some sense, is a man speaking to other men, I do not see why we should insist on the poetry teacher being a specialist. That some amount of scholarship is necessary for the teacher no one will deny but I have a feeling that poetry is being made by our system of education and the type of literary criticism that is practised nowadays into an arcanum, known only to the M.A. in English. A good annotated edition ought to give all the information necessary to a correct interpretation of the poem. And in any case, scholarship about a poem should not be confused with an appreciation of the poem, just as a paraphrase of the poem can never mean either enjoyment or understanding. The handling of facts, the perception of relevance, the sensitiveness and accuracy of response are critical virtues that scholarship does not *ipso facto* confer on its practitioners. I have often wondered if an Economics teacher may not be sometimes better able to communicate a sense of being a fellow-explorer in the golden realms than an English teacher who tends to be regarded and to regard himself as the Infallible, as an Oracle. Another suggestion is that students should

be allowed to bring up before the class any poem not in the course which they have liked and think worthy of being shared with the teacher and the class. Instead of the teacher always telling them to read, now this and now that,—he tends to become a bit of a bore, if not a taskmaster—the boys may come up with their own suggestions to the teacher. Again, the library should be stocked with literally hundreds of poetry-collections, easily borrowed by students. 'These books should be as attractive as possible to the eye and might, in the Junior school, include pictures and drawings but rarely any illustrations of the poems themselves. Poems present their own pictures and the children having seen these pictures, may feel a desire to paint them. But that is very different from being asked to accept someone else's idea of a poem before they have seen the picture with their inward eye.' (I take this quotation from an excellent report, *Poetry and Children*, prepared by the Central Committee on the Teaching of English in the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire. This book contains many suggestions that we should certainly consider in our context also. It is published by Methuen and Co.)

Most teachers hardly recognize how important it is, in interpretation, to read the poem well. There is, of course, no special art here but the teacher should have a clear enunciation, an awareness of the play of speech-rhythms and the metrical stress and a sense of drama. The central fact to be borne in mind is that the reading should be controlled by the interpretation, and be a partner of it. I am told that there are many excellent gramophone records of poetry-readings, and it would be advantageous if the authorities could be persuaded to set aside a portion of the library grant for the purchase of such records. The employment of the gramophone is likely to raise some peculiar problems which will have to be carefully considered. Personally, I feel that a disembodied voice, however enchanting, can never displace the teacher though as a supplement to the poetry class, the record would be, I suppose, quite welcome.

The teaching of poetry is always the most difficult and the most rewarding of the teacher's tasks, particularly the teaching of English poetry in Indian colleges today. Even in England, we are told that the situation is difficult. 'Crowded home conditions, broken or unstable homes, shoddy moral standards, entertainment that requires no effort but blurts out its meaning in vulgar catch-phrases and cheap sensationalism, the emphasis on the visual and the habit of half-hearing, and above all, the pernicious taking for granted of new miracles as well as old—all these operate against poetry, standardizing its magic and turning life into flat prose.' To put across the magic of poetry, the teacher should have, in

addition to the pedagogic skills, a delicate tact, a keen intelligence, a joyous infectious enthusiasm and an accurate honest emotional sensibility. Not easily come by!

One makes a number of suggestions thus, listens to many more, thinks of a further few but finally retires, impatient and dissatisfied. The actual poem—it is laughing at these lumbering suggestions of how to cope with its elusive mocking reality :

> Out of the slimy mud of words, out of the sleet and hail
> of verbal imprecisions,
> Approximate thoughts and feelings, words that have taken the
> place of thoughts and feelings
> There spring the perfect order of speech and the beauty of
> incantation.

Asked to define, Miss Stein said: 'A poem is a poem. The responsibility of the teacher, his test of success, is to impress on his students that that is all we know on earth and all we need to know.'

EXPERIMENTS IN GROUPWISE TEACHING

By Zulfakar Ali Khan

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During the summer vacation in 1957, a Seminar for the teaching of English was held at the Teachers' Training College, Khairtabad, Hyderabad, Deccan. The Seminar was conducted by Mr. F. L. Billows of the British Council, an expert in the teaching of English, who has been carrying on experiments in the field of English teaching. The Seminar lasted for about a month and teachers of English from different institutions participated in it. At the end of the Seminar, heads of different Institutions were also invited, and told how the new method of groupwise teaching could be introduced in the teaching of different subjects, particularly English, so as to make the work of the teacher more effective and the students more interested in their work.

It was something of a coincidence that about twenty-five years ago, during my training at the Sutton Secondary School, Plymouth, in England, I watched similar work being done by one of the teachers there. The work impressed me very much and I myself conducted some experiments on it some twenty-three years back when I used to teach English at the Government High School, Chaderghat. When I heard Mr. Billows advocating this plan, I made up my mind to introduce it in my school. Here I would like to make it clear that the plans suggested by Mr. Billows were

definitely a great improvement on the plans stated above. In the plan that I had seen being worked out at Plymouth, the students were divided into groups, were given certain groupwise assignments and while working out the assignments, they were helped by the teachers if necessary; but as a rule, the groups did their work almost independently. This work was conducted mainly in the teaching of history and no suggestions were forthcoming for the correction of the written work of the students. But Mr. Billows, by giving definite suggestions, not only in regard to the teaching of English, but also in showing easy and very useful methods of correcting the written work of the boys, has made the task of the teacher very easy and I am glad to see that the students also feel great pleasure in carrying out this work and are also being benefited by it much more than they otherwise could.

When the schools re-opened after the summer vacation Mr. Misbahuddin and Mr. Inayatul Hassan, assistant teachers of this school, who had undergone the training given by Mr. Billows, were asked to address the members of the Staff on this new method of teaching English. A detailed talk was also given by me in which my past experiences in this kind of experimentation were stated and light was thrown on the improved method introduced by Mr. Billows. Some of the members of the Staff, after careful thinking and discussions, decided to take it up and experimented upon it in their classes. All sorts of encouragement were given to them and if they had any difficulty at all, practical suggestions were offered for their solution.

The work was introduced in two sections of Class IX and two sections of Class X and one section of Class VIII in English. Some of the teachers introduced it with certain modifications for the teaching of Mathematics also.

In Class IX-A (Urdu) which is handled by me in English, the method was explained to the boys and they were told by me that it was just an experiment and they should try for three months. If they felt satisfied, and wanted to continue, they could do so, but if they felt that they were not being benefited by the new method, it would be dropped. The boys welcomed this suggestion. The class of thirty-three boys was divided into four groups. Group leaders and deputy leaders were elected by the groups themselves. The work was started.

As far as the general teaching of the class was concerned, the usual method of teaching was adopted but in writing answers to questions and different exercises given in the books, the groupwise method was adopted. At the end of every lesson boys were asked to study the exercises individually. Next day the exercises were done orally in the class and then the groups were asked to

sit together and write answers to the questions with the help of the members of the group. The group leader was responsible for conducting the work of a group. In the teaching of Grammar, also, more or less the same method was adopted, but for answering essay type of questions, translation, expansion of proverbs and writing gists of unseen passages etc., the group had to do the work more independently. Every group went to a different place and did its work with the help of the leader and the work of the teacher was to watch and guide if it was necessary to do so. The majority of the members of the group contributed their bit to the answering of questions, but those who were very backward remained idle and depended on the work done by others.

After the exercises were over, the answer books of the group leaders were corrected by the teacher and the other members of the group were asked to correct their own answers with the help of the leader.

At the end of three months, I felt that this new method of teaching was a great improvement, and if followed intelligently and cautiously, it would make the task of the teacher easy and the boys would be benefited by it, much more than otherwise.

At the end of the first experimental period, the boys were given a chance to express their free opinion as was promised them at the beginning. Almost all the boys liked this new method of teaching. Some of them said that, although the groupwise method of teaching was very good, as it inculcated a sense of responsibility in the boys and made them work independently and freely without being spoon-fed by the teacher, yet there was a darker side to it, and that was that some of the weaker boys took undue advantage of the work of the group and depended mostly upon the work done by the leader. One boy wrote that he liked the group work very much because in this way the weaker boys were able to discuss their difficulties more freely with their fellow-students and learnt things in a better way, whereas formerly they had been accustomed to copy down the work done by others in the class; but he complained that even then some of the boys did not take an interest in their work and wished to run away; particularly if the group decided to work after school hours. But on the whole, he preferred the group work as the boys were benefited more by it. One boy who was very backward in the class stated that the group work was all right, but, in this way, some of the members of the group began to depend upon the work of the group leader to a great extent. It would have been better if the group work had been done away with. It should be noted that he was a very backward boy. He did not want to work with the group because

the group leader insisted upon his staying in the school two or three times a week after school hours, while he wanted to run away home as soon as school was over. Anyhow after coming to know about his opinion of the group work he had permission to dissociate himself from the group, and work independently, but he did not do so and continued to be a member of his group.

Excepting this one boy, all the other students wanted the group work to continue. Of course they pointed out certain drawbacks, those stated above, felt in the group work, but the school is trying to put them right.

During the second visit to Hyderabad, Mr. Billows was kind enough to visit the school with Mr. Krishna Rao, Assistant Co-Ordinator, Extension Services, College of Education, Osmania University, to see the working of his new method in this school. I am glad to state that Mr. Billows was very much satisfied with the work done in various classes of this school and suggested that it should be continued.

On the whole I felt that this new method, if used properly, would do a lot of good to the students. It will infuse in the boys real zeal for work and they will be able to work more independently and discuss their problems more freely with one another in their own groups than they would be able to do otherwise in a big class of forty or even more. It also makes the work of the teacher easier as he does not have to examine the written work of all the students. (This does not mean that he should neglect the work of other boys, but will have to check the work done by the group every now and then and correct the work of the leaders in detail.) The other great advantage that I have noticed in this method of teaching is that the relations between the teacher and the taught become much more cordial than in other methods. I feel that the boys begin to regard their teacher more as a friend and a guide than as a mere teacher. I think it would be well worth while to try this method more extensively and judge its results after some more experiments in more institutions throughout the country.

FACTUAL ENGLISH

BY MICHAEL WEST

DURING the period of British rule in India, English was taught as a language of literature. From school text-books which had a rather literary bias and contained poetry, the learner proceeded to the anthology and the set book or books, and thence to a

B.A. with literary English as a subject. To some extent this remains today. The teachers are accustomed to it; it is readily amenable to classroom treatment; it is easy to examine.

Lately there has been some swing towards oral methods. English, like all other languages, 'is essentially a means of oral communication, a medium of conversation. Only secondarily is it a language of reading and writing. A word in itself has no meaning : it derives its meaning from the situation: with one intonation and in one setting it means one thing; otherwise another —or another. Hence the spoken phrase and its situation are primary and essential elements in learning.' Such is the argument upon which the oral or 'Linguistic' method is based.

We believe that neither of these approaches completely covers the needs of the present day. Both cover the needs of some, but both the groups so covered are very limited—both those to whom English is a language purely of literature (as are Latin, and Sanskrit) and those who have occasion to have personal intercourse and hold conversations in English.

There is a large and ever-expanding group to whom English is merely a medium of factual intercommunication both spoken and printed. These are the students in schools and colleges of science and technology, and the workers in factories and laboratories. At present English is a subject in the courses of these schools and colleges; but it is taught by teachers who have grown up in the literary tradition and they teach it as literature using literary text-books. More rarely the teacher is a modernist, a follower of the Linguistic Method who believes in the spoken phrase and sentence as a unit and minimizes the importance of the mere 'lexicographical word'.

Requirements of the Student of Science and Technology

Let us endeavour to set out just what are the requirements of this group: What *do* they need? and What do they *not* need?

The teacher has to convey facts of science or technology to a class which may consist of students of three or four or more different mother-tongues. He has to explain and use a number of English technical terms. We say 'English' because, though most of these terms are of classical origin and international usage, he gets them from English, the most international language. Suppose that all the students in the class speak and understand Hindi he might teach in Hindi introducing the foreign terms in Hindi or other spelling. This is what our Saxon ancestors did: they took over the Norman terms of law and gastronomy and embedded them in the Germanic structure of their language. This no doubt tends to happen today in the lower grades of

craftsmanship, for example in the garage and the domestic electrical repair shop. But it is not a desirable process or one to be encouraged educationally. These students are highly likely to meet persons who do not know Hindi, which is indeed far from a universal language even in India; they will have to read and understand directions and technical words which cannot all be translated into Hindi and converse with non-Hindi-knowing experts. They may go outside India. Hence English must be the choice.

Let us see what this teacher and his pupils need of English. A spoken language is made up of five things—(1) *Structure,* (2) *Vocabulary,* (3) *Pronunciation,* (4) *Intonation,* (5) *Behaviourisms* (Delay words, polite clichés, gestures, wordless noises.) For the written and printed language we must add (6) *Writing and Spelling,* (7) *Reading* and (8) *Symbols.*

Let us study the requirements of this group in each of these eight departments or aspects of language ability.

(1) They need the most economical structure which is still normal English—not pidgin—but has no frills.

(2) They need a vocabulary which is capable of explaining the meaning of the technical terms required in the course. (It is useless to attempt to list or predict the technical terms themselves since these will be taught not in the English classroom but in the technical lessons and in laboratories or workshops).

(3) They need a standard of pronunciation which is intelligible among themselves and to other Indians. Those who have contact with foreigners may need a rather higher standard although it is incumbent upon the European settled in India to learn to understand the Indian pronunciation of his language and in some measure to adapt his own speech to it. Those who will visit Europe will need a higher standard. There is, however, no justification for inflicting upon all a standard which will be required only by a few; modern phonetics is sufficiently advanced to make it comparatively easy to improve or alter a system of pronunciation. Film actors are constantly having to do so.

(4), (5) *Intonation and Behaviourisms.* These are of less than usual importance since English is here needed as a means of factual communication rather than of conversation. This point is elaborated below.

(6), (7) *Writing and Reading.* Writing is of much less importance than reading. Only in the higher stages will these students be required to write reports and engage in technical correspondence. Written composition might be important if the examination is of an essay type; this would be an argument for not using the essay type, but rather the multiple short answer

which is more easily marked and less confused in its evaluation of a student by errors of language which are not errors of fact or reasoning. Reading ability and comprehension of the spoken word are of the greatest importance. A reading vocabulary is needed which is much larger than the vocabulary of normal communication. The ability to use a dictionary is to be stressed; also in most sciences (as Flood[1] has shown) such knowledge of roots and prefixes as will enable a student to break up and interpret scientific words—*tel : angi : ectasis, fili : branchia, hept : ode.*

(8) *Symbols.* These will be acquired in the technical classes.

Linguistic elements which are not required

Let us turn now to the things which they do *not* need. Here we shall be able to make some estimate of the present wastage of effort and perhaps so be enabled to outline a more economical method of dealing with the problem as a whole.

We shall (in the Appendix) show some examples of selection of linguistic items—of structure, vocabulary, etc.—for these students. We shall put ourselves in the position of their teacher and enquire of each item whether it is really necessary and useful. Some items may be rejected altogether, others may be deferred to a later stage of the course. Our prime consideration is for the majority of students rather than for those fewer ones who are outstanding and may go far. We must find an effective minimum, but that minimum must be adequate.

Before making such a detailed scrutiny it is necessary to clarify the distinction between Conversational, Literary and Factual English.

English as Conversation

A conversation is a form of behaviour of which language forms a part. It may form a very small part, as in this example: 'The Eight Wells'.

X Well?
Y . . .
X Well!! . . . . Well, well, well.
Y Well?!
X We-e-ll. O well!

The conversation is purely intonational. X and Y are collaborators in a scheme which Y has just offered, unsuccessfully to the Manager. Translated into words it would run thus :

X What did he say?

[1] Flood, W.E., *The Problem of Vocabulary in the Popularization of Science,* Baker & Boyd, 1957.

Y (No answer; therefore No)
X I am angry and astonished. (Long pause). What a pity!
Y Surely you are not going to give up?
X I am doubtful....But I suppose we must go on trying.

The content of this conversation is almost wholly emotional; but there is, indeed, an emotional undercurrent in every conversation, whether in the form of expression of feeling, or of concealment, or avoidance of provocation of feeling in the other person. Words in such a setting may mean less than their lexicographical definition ('Such a delightful party!') or more ('Bad show!') or the exact opposite (['Thank you so much'] 'Not at all! It was nothing.')

Teaching of this sort of English, including all those elements of feeling and behaviour, is very valuable to the immigrant and the refugee, hence it has tended to be stressed, perhaps overstressed, in England and America, where these are the main problems, as if it were the only sort of language-teaching worthy of consideration. But here we are dealing with a very different problem—the teaching of English to people who use a mother-tongue for social and emotional intercourse and need English only for factual communication.

Exclusion of Emotive Elements

Factual English is the language of scientific and technical fact: it has no room for emotion. All the intensives and emotive words such as *frightfully, enormous* are excluded from it. If a thing is big, state its size: if it is abnormal, how far does it differ from the norm. The worst crime of the scientific writer is to overstate.

Fixation of Meaning

In Factual English a word means the same thing whatever its context. A Benzine ring is exactly what it is in every setting whereas a ring (apart from its multiplicity of meanings) might in the one meaning (a group of persons) be pejorative in reference to an auction or appreciative in reference to friends and helpers. The main difficulty in scientific terminology is to compel the terms to mean one thing and one thing only. *Stomach* is a troublesome word: it may mean the whole digestive cavity and its contents—the abdomen, or only the enlarged part of the digestive tract just below the oesophagus. The prefix gastr-/ and the adjective gastric have to be employed to clarify the meaning but, alas, there is no distinctive noun. The same difficulty arises in

regard to the whole of a factual vocabulary. *Heat* must be confined to its limited sense measured in calories and be distinguished from *temperature; stress* and *strain* must have their exact meanings—not *nervous tension.* It is very convenient in the limited vocabularies of story-books to have nice elastic words such as *Put up,—up with,—up at,—in for,—across; skirt* (*dress—edge—go along the edge*) and to use words figuratively, e.g., *hot=exciting, dangerous* and *cold=unemotional.* Provided that these 'stretches' are inferrable they are harmless and helpful: they take their meaning from the context; whereas the first thing which the student of science must learn is to be exact in his terms, to define them precisely and use them according to their definition.

Causes of duplication

The chief causes of duplication in vocabulary are two: (1) Stylistic levels, (2) Avoidance of repetition.

We may say 'A Fellow'—'A Person'—or 'A Personage', 'Have a shot at'—'Try'—'Endeavour'—and so on. These differences are essentially emotional. The Low Stylistic level implies a chummy, friendly attitude; the High Stylistic level is intended to suggest pomp and dignity. Both of these, *chumminess* and *pomposity* are feeling-tones. It is as if we were to write this equation

$$(x + y)^2 = x^2 + 2xy + y^2$$

or

$$(\mathrm{x} + \mathrm{y})^2 = \mathrm{x}^2 + 2\mathrm{xy} + \mathrm{y}^2$$

or

$$(\mathrm{X} + \mathrm{Y})^2 = \mathrm{X}^2 + 2\mathrm{XY} + \mathrm{Y}^2 \; !$$

—according to how one felt at the moment of writing.

This high level style is one to which scientists are particularly prone. It results in an excessive use of the form Abstract-noun + Passive Voice. Instead of 'I tried' we find 'An endeavour was made.' Partly this is done so as to keep the statement modestly impersonal, but, since the author or authors sign the article, this is a rather meaningless convention and one which gives a lot of trouble to foreigners, especially those in whose language there is no passive voice or one which is rarely used; and such languages are many. Moreover the abstract noun is always more difficult to understand and to use than the concrete noun or the equivalent active verb.

The sole aim of Factual English is simplicity, clarity, truth. Stylistic levels, whether High or Low, have no place in it. Its function is to tell what we know or think, not what we feel.

The second cause of duplication is Avoidance of Repetition.

In the case of nouns we have 'the former—the latter—the aforesaid—the. . . .mentioned below' etc.

This stylistic bogey of non-repetition had perhaps its origin in the period when reading aloud was more common than it is today. Captain Charles Wade is referred to in a novel as Our hero, The Captain, Wade, Charles, My son, Her fiancé, etc. etc.

In Factual English if the same thing is being referred to, the same word should be used. As Flood suggests, Algebra would become very confusing if $(x + y)^2$ were expressed as the former multiplied by the former plus twice the former multiplied by the latter plus the latter multiplied by the latter.

Even pronouns should be used with caution; Gray[1] has drawn attention to them as a major factor of misunderstanding.

A second form of avoidance of repetition is the use of synonyms which have little if any difference in meaning: *Luminous, shining, glowing, lambent, lucent,* etc. In Factual English there can be no irresponsible variation of terms merely for the sake of variety: *luminescent* means giving out light without heat; *fluorescent* means taking in energy, e.g., from X rays, and giving it out as visible light, whereas *phosphorescent* means giving out light after the exciting rays have ceased. Such words as *refulgent, rutilant, luculent,* etc., etc., have no meaning. Nor is there any need for the student to learn any words except those of the fundamental vocabulary, e.g. *bright,* and those others which are specific and carefully defined limitations of it.

Limitation of Structure

Those factors which cause dilution of vocabulary are operative also in respect of Structures. Thus we have 'Suppose he is, If he be', 'Were he, If he were, If he was.' The words *should/would* may signify intention (I should if I could) or habit (He would go to the library every day) or supposition (This should/would be the library.) or obligation (I should go, but I won't). On the principle 'One word—one meaning' we can eliminate all idiomatic sub-usages. Incidentally, in the early stages at any rate, much economy of learning effort may be made by dispensing with Reported Speech: He said 'I will' instead of 'He said that he would.' At all stages long passages of Reported Speech should be avoided. They are very troublesome in respect of the verbs and to most Indian mother-tongues the pronouns can be very confusing. The

[1] Gray, S. G. and Leary. 'What Makes a Book Readable': University of Chicago.'

Question tag (is, isn't it: does, doesn't it, etc) is a grammarian's delight but a headache to the foreign learner. In fact its main function is an emotional one, a polite blunting the edge of a bald statement. It has little place in Factual English: we do not say '$Cl\ OH_3$ + Na OH becomes Na Cl + $2\ H_2O$, *doesn't it?*'

Selected Vocabulary and List of Structures

The required vocabulary for a course in Factual English has already been suggested in the Appendix to the General Service List (Longmans) and in Flood's 'Problem of Vocabulary in the Popularization of Science'. It amounts to some 2,000 words. This does not mean that no words except those so listed are to be used in a teaching-course; it means that the aim of the course is to build up that vocabulary (together with an adequate set of structures) and that the examiner may assume that vocabulary as known. Naturally in teaching any vocabulary the teacher will be compelled to use a number of *ad hoc* words or usages; these should be so indicated in the text-book; they are not listed and are not subject to test. The examiner also may use *ad hoc* words, but would supply their meaning. Apart from these *ad hoc* words there are Assumable words such as jute in Bengal and Universals such as *Lemonade, Coca-Cola, Fordson.* These are all legitimate instruments, but not a part of the aim.

In Appendix I we have given a detailed examination of the vocabulary of a good, well-constructed text-book in the light of the requirements of Factual English. Its chief fault is its domestic background. These students are not learning the language for discussion of everyday life and the home: they use their mother-tongue for that.

In Appendix II we have examined some structures and usages in Hornby's 'Guide to Patterns and Usages'.

Practical Conclusion

Suppose that this concept of Factual English is accepted, how would it be put into practice—embodied in text-books, used in teacher-training, taught in the schools, tested in examination?

It is easy to say how this should not be done. The natural tendency would be to issue it as a detailed syllabus and leave it to the text-book writers and publishers to do their best—or worst—with it. This would merely produce a mass of guess-work and hasty adaptations of existing material. The problem is much too complicated for such rough and ready treatment.

In teaching Conversational English the teacher is all-important.

He is teaching not a code but a form of behaviour. His text-book and course do not matter very much: he is the course and he may be trained 'up in the air' without specific reference to any one course or book.

It is not easy to produce such teachers; it takes a long time and only a relatively small number of teachers are capable of assimilating such training. But, in order to cope with our present urgent problem we need a rapid turnover in our training and we cannot pick and choose those to be trained. On the other hand, our problem is much simpler than that of producing competent teachers of Conversational English. The learning material of a course in Factual English can be embodied in a text-book and the function of the teacher is to help the pupil to acquire it: he is introducer, aid and supervisor but not direct linguistic source and inspirer. There is, however, the embarrassing problem of using the Training Colleges and official Short Courses to propagate the use of one uniform text-book. It follows that it is desirable that this text-book should be the property of the Department of Education as author although the actual process of production and publication may be done by a commercial firm.

This procedure is desirable for another reason. It is not difficult to produce a new book on an existing pattern: it is an extremely difficult and protracted task to produce a new pattern, especially if this is to make exceptionally low demands on the teacher to carry it through. Almost any text-book can be successful in the hands of a highly-trained teacher armed with an elaborate 'Teacher's Book', but here we have to produce something which almost any teacher can use successfully with a minimum of training and instruction. This demands trial editions observed and tested in the hands of average and below-average teachers. It is a task best carried out by a Department of Education or by persons deputed for the purpose. It is worth doing well because the cost of waste of time in schools due to faulty instruments is fabulous[1] and the gain from careful groundwork in preparing such instruments far exceeds the cost of preparing them, however high that may be.

The examination must be keyed to the course, and vice versa. This itself requires experiment, how best to measure those qualities required in the learner; for it is the examination which ultimately determines what happens in the classroom, regardless of syllabus, text-book, teacher-training or anything else.

[1] The cost of five minutes' waste of time due to a faulty text-book in one Junior School class in England and Wales is about £2,500 per annum.

Appendix I. Words contained in the vocabulary of a good normal text-book which might be unsuitable in a course of Factual English.

BOOK I

apple	christen	hairdresser	saddle
armchair	clergyman	jug	sermon
baker	coach	kettle	shorn*
birthday	concert	kiss*	tattered*
breakfast	conductor	liner	tennis
bus	crumpled*	murder	toss*
cafe	daddy	parcel	wedding
cake	forlorn*	park	whisky
ceiling	goldfish	programme	

BOOK II

awry	cigar	ghost	pork
bacon	cloakroom	grave,	queen
barrow	cricket	hiking	Reverend
bees			sardine
billiards	darts	javelin	sausage
boarding-school	doll	limerick	silly
broom	Easter	lipstick	skate
burglar	Emperor	mare	slang
butcher	florin	martyr	smash
cabbage	fox	oath	tomato
caravan	'fridge'	olive	toy
cemetery	funeral	pickpocket	velvet

Appendix II

The General Service List shows how relatively infrequent some of the less usual structures and usages are, but in many cases a relatively frequent item may be ambiguous, e.g., I should = ? would, ?, and ought therefore to be avoided, or easily replaceable by some more direct expression (e.g., Rich as he is → Although he is very rich).

The following items selected from Hornby's *Guide to Patterns and Usages* are intended only as suggestions as to the sort of items which might be included in a 'Black List' in preparing a course in Factual English.

Structural items which might perhaps be deferred (D) or Excluded (E) in a course of Factual English. → = should be, may be.

1. Inversion. 'Little did I know' E
2. Question tags. 'Is, isn't it', etc. D
3. I shall (except in Questions, Doubt, & Inevitability) D
4. You shall (compulsion) E
5. I should. . . . You, he would :

* *Ad hoc* words from a nursery rhyme.

(Prefer 'I would' and reserve 'should' for obligation, probability and subjunctives). Where possible prefer 'ought to'. D

6. Dare as anomalous finite. (Prefer Do you dare? I do not dare.) E
7. Think to = expect. 'Never thought to see you' E
8. Passive voice: 'Was he seen to jump?' → 'Did anyone see him....' E
9. (Ditto) 'I was made to do it' → 'They made me....' D
10. Let there be → We must have (Keep Let for Allow) D
11. I would have you know → want you to E
12. Have my hair cut → get D
13. Have = allow. 'Can't have you doing that' E
14. Keep preposition near verb. 'Put your hat on' → 'put on your hat' D
15. Avoid abstract nouns. 'Insisted on his innocence' → 'that he was innocent' D
16. Avoid indirect report: 'Confessed that he had made a mistake' → said, 'I have....' D
17. me → for me. 'Cash me a cheque' E
18. Exclamatory : 'What a big one!' E
19. Exclamatory : 'How big it is!' E
20. Avoid the Past perfect tense as it reverses the order of events. Prefer 'He did this; then he did that'. D
21. 'You will have heard' → 'I suppose you have....' E
22. *Can* = *may*. 'They can be dangerous' → may be, are often. Reserve *can* for possibility. Reserve *may* for permission. Prefer 'are often,—sometimes, likely to be' where that is the real meaning. D
23. *Will* expressing habit: 'He will get up at six every day.' E
24. *Would* expressing habit E
25. *Will* expressing supposition: 'This will be the library?' E
26. *Grow* = *become*: 'It grew late' D
27. Avoid omission of *that* and *who* D
28. Exclamatory inversion: 'Off she went!' E
29. *Must* = *is likely to* D
30. Subjunctive: 'If it were true.' (Prefer colloquial 'was') D
31. Asked if he were at home → was E
32. *Will* = insist on, are always: 'If you will be so foolish' → Why are you so....? D

33. *That*: 'I am not a fool that you should suggest such a thing.' E
34. *Being poor* → As he was poor E
35. Infinitive expressing cause: 'Sorry for him to have failed' → sorry that he failed or He has failed: I am sorry for him E
36. *Though* at the end of a sentence: 'He's quite honest, though.' E
37. *May* expressing concession. 'He may be rich, but....' → 'Although he is....' E
38. Rich as he is (Concession) E
39. *For* = *in spite of*: 'For all his wealth' E
40. Keep 'Since' for time (not 'because') D
41. Avoid *for* = *because* D
42. Keep 'While' for time (Not 'Although') E
43. If → although. 'Will do it if it takes a year.' E

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